Peacock's Flesh and Lion's Blood

by
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Part I.

The hour that has no dragons in it

INSANITY

When the sky is dark, I lie in bed
and feel my sanity crack and smash like a crystal
and a thousand shards of my mind scatter.
And I look and see a thousand mes
each on one of a thousand worlds
looking across the void of dreams
and sometimes I hear them
talking to each other. I see on
these worlds a thousand, ten thousand
maddening creatures, and palaces built so
high they touch the sky and see things I could
never see in reality. Then I see things
of nightmares, and hear things of nightmares,
as I feel the rush of insanity.

GRASSLAND

Swaying bodies of green reeds
to every side of me;
four foot high,
nothing in the whole world
beyond this. The reeds twist and
turn watching me,
but take no action against
or for me. I am alone,
the last human
in all the world, but I
do not fear them.
They do not fear me.

THE UNICORN AND THE MINOTAUR

The two fought by the golden shore,
the unicorn and the minotaur,
beasts of light and beasts of lore,
the unicorn with her hooves to gore
out the minotaur's eyes.
They battled long in the noonday heat,
the shore alive as it watched flesh meet
against the horns and the hooves to beat
like thunder in desert skies.
The minotaur in fear was haste
to kill the unicorn despite the waste
so that he would not die.
But this I say to you, that though he won
when his hated enemy died
he cried.

TAMLIA

In the grass where the shadows go
they have a master and a queen,
and none of them will ever know
for none of them have ever seen
her hair so gold it makes the sun ashamed,
where she wanders the dragons lie.
Her world is in a portrait's frame,
why look, you can see the birds that fly
above her head and her shadow land,
every shadow at her command.
She lives in a mortal's mind,
but sometimes I see her just behind
the shadow-strewn blind.

ZOADICIA

When I am young, teach me the craft
of the spear, and weave blade songs behind my eyes,
Zoadicia. Across the obsidian wings of night
birth ten million blade-sung warriors and
teach them the art of murdering gods
fit only to be blasphemed.
                But, when I
am old lie with me and whisper of the end,
as if God had merely closed his eyes
and the world stopped not in fire or blood,
but was merely silenced
                like crippled thunder
in a summer storm.

GHAZAL FOR MY BELOVED

Her days slant awkwardly, as her feet slide upon the broken
paths untaken by her life. Her cindered eyes beckon, and I follow.

Give me strength enough to love. My silk-footed words
have caught her upon nails of rain; the woman melts
into her lover
and is drowned in his embrace, in his dagger face.

Her flesh is the colour of dried roses as she sifts through
slender, ordinary dreams, like rough beads in amber.

I bleed, and in my blood, I find her face
stained upon my words.

We breathe in the hot wind like wine, and spend eternity
in a moment's glance, before we twist away our sight
like nails from each other's eyes.

The splinter of your laughter burned.

I gave myself completely to you, and your sad eyes,
but I will leave you in that January dark
where
golden-lipped love cannot intrude.
I love you too much to die.

If you find that place where dreams are dead
enter in.
There are only crumpled corpses behind
our eyes, their faces, like our hopes, left to rot. Come

into the frailty of our
days,
both bright and dark.

THE GODS

Beyond the conceiving even of the gods
is my darling one
in a world of sunset fire oceans and wasp
gold trees, sitting in an autumn lyre town, where the jaguar gods
of night and the fitful tide have slept.

Between the lantern cities of Carthragrell, between the
laughter of her eyes I fall upon the nails of grass,
and hang upon the ground
like a sparrow raped of wings. Where the
long-fingered lords of water and the princes of the air gather
there you may find my beloved,
where Camyrd was crucified upon
the spire of his dreams there lay my beloved,
beyond the conceiving of the gods.

I am clothed in flame-soaked skin,
tasting my tears on the thirsting plains of Mirigon.
Tell me
you gods of sunset and fire,
you kings of the dust and grave-soaked ground,
where will you go when I am dead
and only my beloved remains,
she who is above the gods?

MY AZALL SISTER

Sometimes when we went to the park she would become the trees, grow bark on skin, and turn her brown hair to green leaves.

In the sandbox she would become sand, her eyes transformed into two polished onyx beads, as her hair coiled and became the sandbox's wooden frame.

In the doctor's office, she would become a chair, a magazine, a pen. And when the doctor examined her she became him, with his sad eyes, and his bald spot, mimicking every word,
as if they were her words.

The doctors all said she was a pretty girl, at those times when she kept her feminine shape.

My lovely Azall sister lived twenty years in other shapes, until she became a hangman's noose and murdered herself upon dusty rafters, in her cold apartments, where dreams shattered.

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the park she became the trees, grew
bark on skin, turned brown hair
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years in other shapes till she became
a hangman's noose and murdered herself
from dusty rafters, in cold apartments,
where dreams shattered,
leaving me alone of all I'd done.

Sometimes
when we went
to the park . . .

I LOVE THE SPARROW

I love the sparrow in the grass,
her human bones, her woman's skin,
her bright black wings,
her sweet caress,
her sins.

THE SECRET CONFESSION OF DOUGLAS GRANBARRISA

I will fly or I will die,
because I can't live a mortal life
like other men,
or settle down with cold
lovers in their beds, having
sex in passionless embraces,
until the bleary morning
pokes up her head.

BHISDAR

Bhisdar, I am passionate for you, my triple-eyed lover.
On the Ganges when the sun lit up the world in purple flame
I looked for you and saw your
mother washing out your bloodied clothes.
She said you had honoured her
in the most dishonourable of ways.

Bhisdar, return to me, even as dry bones.
Birth my children in the country of the dead, even with
your womb slit asunder.
Let my dead children laugh in those darkly
sacred under-reaches.
I will join you, gentle lover,
when my time is appointed. Wait for me, or return to me.
Either way, I will not be denied.

UNPREDICTABILITY

The quote is on my lips, like a firebrand.
"An unpredictable ruler is a difficult ruler to control."
My lips move awkwardly, letting the essence of the
thought out, into the ears of the king.

And, because he is young, and his thoughts
are new, he takes this thought and makes of it a godhead,
so that all other thoughts fall, cascading from
this thought alone.

The other ministers look at me
in horror. Only then do I leave, and let my cancer
eat into his bones.

G'MYRAOAN

Do we dream?
At G'myraoan, upon its crystal ocean, the lovers stand
upon their terraces, and freeze away their souls
above that frozen sea

their heads bellowing like
dead flower bulbs over their tattered, withered bodies,
their hands delicate as icy spider webs.

I grasped with hungry fingers for just one
girl, as her jaguar eyes looked down at me
upon my frozen ship, with pity.

Do we dream? Or are those fantasies
less a dream, and more a prophesy?

THARTEM

In the glass city of Thartem, petal-walled, I found
a bottle, slender as a doe's neck at the head, round as
a woman's breast at the base.

From this, I drank up the dust and felt the souls
of ten and twenty thousand enter me, and become
as I was, given flesh and given destiny, and
given all the hopes and fears of flesh.

And then the moment faded, the city slid away
like a chrysalis, and afterward, I found my days made
smooth like glass, and found my life as frail
as the black rose.

STONE CHILD

When your flesh grew too dark
we buried you, my daughter, and made
a tribute for your bones, by laying these
few stones upon your grave.

And we few souls clustered about you,
and made a child of pebbles, an infant of stones,
to offer as your daughter in this frozen place.

Accept her Khyran, and make of her a daughter
worthy of your name, you who never wed,
who had no daughters of the veil.

RECYCLABLE MAN

Today, in the bone gardens I found my eye, tarnished
and broken by raven claws. And, taking back my eye, I found
I saw with other visions and dreamed other dreams.

On the black wine shore, I found my broken hand, twisted
by the gulls into a foreign shape, and made it again my hand,
though it served me strangely.

And, when I found my legs, bent and bloodied by men's
handicraft, I took them up, and walked a crippled walk, through
the streets of El Danar.

And still, I find myself misplaced, through field and meadow
and dark wine Nile, buried in a thousand places, in memory
of me, as if I were a multitude divided, as if a man needed
ten thousand burials to be remembered.

BEAUTIFUL SKIN

She has beautiful skin.
"Daddy, do you love me?"
Skin white as milk,
white as snow.
"Daddy, do you love me?"
Skin pale as the moon.
"Daddy, do you love me?"
Broken neck, by her father,
lying in the morgue.

MELFALT

“Have you seen the sun?” My lover Melfalt
asked me.
“Only in the books of man.”
“And have you seen the moon?”
“Once, when I was first born, and my mother
took me to the hills of Donovar.”
“Then can you tell me what the sun is,
and where the moon goes in the twilit day?”
“Only when you tell me if the sun lay
upon the sky, or behind your golden eyes?”

YOLARN

“Melfalt asks that you come home,” Yolarn of
the scarlet veil says to me.
“Only when my soul is mine own,” I answer
back, “only when I have seen the sun again
from the hills of Donovar.
Then return and take my soul from me
and give to Melfalt the essence of my being,
though my flesh shall be no longer,
for it shall be dead as the books of Man,
dead as the lives of men.”

IN TROUBLED SLEEP

The long-fingered
lords of death have come
into the stairways of my skull,
shattering my troubled sleep
like dew upon
the deep black ocean
when day has died
at last.

THE PEOPLE OF THE SUN

(In a land where the sands
burn eternal, and
the fiery blossoms
of heat explode;
in this land change
lives not,
and the Nile
is the mouth of the sun.)

The cities roar along the shore
like angry hives,
as the grass sings
on either side of hell.
And they in their cities
aspire to live where the
sun has trod,
a hint of a subtle
claw beneath their fingertips,
and their lips

most alien and strange,
grinning like idols
upon their thrones
of jade; but, like men,
in death, they feed the worms.

ADILEA

Adilea craves the fire
like an addiction and when
all is spent and
coldly she lies on a bed
still is the hunger ablaze
and she is content.

UULUURN

We placed her aboard ship
and sent her to Uuluurn,
where the shades gather.
And amid her passing we wept
and put our tears where she
lay, allowing our grief
to enclose the world,
even at Uuluurn, where
the shades gather.

CHARAX'S SMILE

On dark bronze lips what
can we find but Charax's smile,
the dust of dawn,
a wry, sad glimpse
into the secret worlds
of a woman's heart
whose heart has turned to shards?
On dark bronze lips
Charax's smile seems
the only reason the bearer
of such lips are not, at once, crucified.

SPIDER'S LOGIC

"No woman wants to touch me, what
woman could without repulsion like a spider's
breathing creeping along her fingertips
to her soul within."
"Make them wear gloves then,"
the spider in my mind's dark inner
places said, and grinned.

CEHRRYD AT LUZULAN

I tried father. I'm sorry.

I went to Luzulan, Father, to find your
daughter, but found nothing save her ghost
on every street.
I couldn't reach her and the further
I went into the city the further I knew
I couldn't touch her,
So, like a fly almost caught

in amber but at last, breaking free
I turned away, knowing you loved her better.
But what of that?
I loved her better too. I love her more
than you ever loved your son.

DEATH-GOD

"Are you alright?" she asks me,
as we sit in that café, sipping on smoke
and cigarettes. And what can I say
but yes, I'm fine,
but I see the god of death
out of the corner of my eye.
She does not smile back at me.

WHEN CYMERIC'S DAYS ARE DONE

When his days are laid claim to
by the hands of God's beneficent gift
of dying
        shall he be in awe at God's
unfailing law, or shall he moan and beat
his chest like the daughters of Nineveh?

Or shall he close his eyes and ears and seal
himself within himself, away from worlds
without beginning or conclusion,
                until his sins like moths escape
and cover all his frame, impotently feeding
on his life in their vain attempt to return
again into that lost and ordered Eden?
        Or shall he simply slay his dreams
and dream of nothing save what God has made?

IN AULKORIS

In Aulkoris thorn-shod
shall Aulkoria retire her hands
upon those white sacrificial walls
like jagged instruments of war

as her child, like a fattened dog
returns beside Aulkoria's rose-scented feet,
like a cancer to be exorcised
or virgins sold by greedy mothers
to be little more
than aged whores
at dusk.

AT THE CLIFFS OF ALVERN

At the cliffs of Alvern all the dead who ever
lived shall lay their bones upon those ragged roots of stone,
when the sun is but an ember
sputtering in a frozen sky.
And then they shall arise on delicate
bone wings, and take possession of their final days
as the hollow wind marches
through the grass
and fields of black roses rise
and curl into the air, to give the dead their final flesh.
Then the wind shall cease and nothing more
will be heard through earth and sky save
the heartbeats of black roses, like some
impotent, crippled thunder.

INTO THE WASTELAND

I trod the edge of the wasteland,
seeing the corpses on their feet
in the mad rush of a thousand souls
through causeway and through
gate, with the blank-eyed stares
of sleepwalkers. I trod the edge
of the city, not daring to enter in.

STEPS

I am warped
upon the
curling stairway of
my love,
snared
in the steps I have
not taken.

WIANDYRAL

All we have become we have lost, for
its inception in us at once has killed us.
Have you never heard of the sorceress
Wiandyral, who in her hatred
was silenced by hatred no more,
but ceased in her guise as sorceress
and seer, mage, and the maker of men,
and in so ceasing became them again,
and more to her was granted still?

JAQINA, THE HANDMAIDEN

Blood silver I step in my mistress' steps,
blood blots the day neath my mistress' shadow,
her indigo eyes blazing to blindness
neath the handmaiden's sight;
silent the battlefield in times of her longing,
but more silent still the heartache,
the venom a handmaiden feels neath her mistress's
touch, touching to venom the handmaiden's
longing to shatter the mistress in the cup
of her rage, and shatter to shadows the strand of
her being neath the dawn of the day.

AT AXUM

At Axum they murdered silence with a kiss;
ten thousand voices rose like a crippled thunder upon
the coral streets, at once words
like broken moths fell
and covered up the dead and the dead
like cool shadows burnished the unborn blades
of their teeth upon the corpse
Silence; nor can I grieve.

AT OIRUZ

I picked a single strawberry at Oiruz,
and later we went to market, and Mother said
to watch the beggars and never smile too much
when they came by, but only hit them once
and then run away, pretending to play,
not knowing how much sticks hurt, or rocks.

Later, at Oiruz again, after harvest and the
harvest time a wolf came by, and calmly laying down
a few small pebbles on the ground I picked
up a stick and chased the beast, not knowing
wolves could never beg, but stole my sticks
and stole my stones and stole away in shadows
a fleeting echo of my cries, at Oiruz after the harvest time.
And now I know why beggars beg, for their lives.

FROM NIACOTOS

From Niacotos you walk fifty leagues
southeast, to Korech. There is nothing between,
only a solitary wasteland grey as birchwood.
There's no feature that tells you
how far you've gone, and even watching the sunrise
and set doesn't really mean anything because you don't feel
yourself move, and the sky never seems to change.

If no time passed, if the seconds didn't melt
into minutes or the minutes into hours, you'd think Korech
was just a few feet away.
When I think of you at Korech, no matter

how much the real distance I always think I can touch you,
I'll always think you're just a few feet away.
Time and Love are sisters in this way.

HAS THE NIGHT COME, MY DARLING ONE?

Has the night come
my darling one?
Has the night taken the laughter
from your eyes?

The moon hangs
like a fitful fire
that will not rest or burn,
even as we condemned
to pen
our drunken opiate lines
cannot rest or burn.

BAEXEIJ

Baexeij: the word betrays herself and I like a man
mirrored shall step within the icy doors of light
and cease to be.
I see before me her world, a world of white
dragonfly wings like ivory woven into veins and clear
crystal doors which lead into the higher
elder worlds where lay
the princes of the air.

Oh Calthar, I saw your Autumn king like
broken argyle bones crucified on a bronze
tree of golden light. Cn'rys has laid his legacy of leaves
and Sarhaim nights upon the scales of her eyes: Baexeij awakens
in delicate bone splendour, and as I cease
to be so shall I at last become.

ZYARA

Zyara lingers in my mind like broken shadows
cast upon my sight in waking dreams. Her plains were gold and
leaves flowed like the lips of her mouth down every naked
stream.
I found her beauty in wasp-burnt trees, in the soft
crow tresses of the rounded hills and everywhere
was Zyara's voice; upon the sky,
upon the milk black trees, upon my tongue,
until I too was a child of hers in that land where
lies were dead and haunted
truths caught me
like the nails of rain.

OUR CHILDREN

We hope
our children
will unravel our own
dark sins
and know
nothing of who
once we were
so they cannot
repeat us in our
folly.

AT THE STONES OF EHRENCLOU

At the stones of Ehrenclou
I watched you undress the night
like a little girl:
by the gods of winter and fire
how I have loved you, my angel,
burnt in flames older than betrayal.

AT ILCYURCIA

At Ilcyurcia I sought out your
name and found it cast upon
the stones,
        tangled in the dark
beneath your spirit,
as your body
lay hanging
        broken
upon the ocean
of the sky.

THE STORY OF ESTER

        We are a song of blood and in our sinews lay a history profane;
        each cell remembers Susa and the sea along the shore of the world's edge, each cell remembers the gardens of Nyaign where the gods
                came down and mingled their seed with man,
        thus begetting a race of kings.

        In every step from the waking to the sleeping
of our lives lay the remnant of a history older than the gods
we name, the lifeless, petty gods.

As I sit and write the centuries call to me from the shadowed ocean of unremembered lives, and I again
        stand in a land of dripping sunlight,
in a world long dead
                in our minds.

Let me but remember, dimly, dimly; let the echo of your
life roll down the centuries, to find me willing
to pen these words,
these half-burnt, broken words.

Your form is but a nighted echo within this parchment
of bones and skin, but I know that I am as you were,
my lovely, my lost angel light.
My skin is born of your skin;
we form a great tapestry through the ages,
spent in silence, lost in the jaws of history,
lost in the ocean of unremembered lives;
but I remember.
My bones tell, and the wind
whispers, from a darkened future
Autumn dry.

CATHEDRAL OF BODIES

It is our senses that deceive;
in all the darkness
of this place,
of skull light and candle,
of bone wall and door, it is still
a holy place
where the dead
are honoured and the soul
has rest,
where the incense
of death forces us to recall
our future fate,
upon the walls,
with candlelight streaming
from our deceiving eyes.

THE BURNING OF ALEXANDRIA

We are the dreams of God, my love, and like all dreams
awaken to a grim-lipped dawn, become intangible
like the ghosts of flame, and are carried
as seeds into his domain.

Nothing is lost, love, neither you nor I nor words
nor deeds forget or are forgotten.

The hungry raven-eyed fires that licked and washed
away a billion words from Alexandria,
stalking like a lioness
before her hands had fed upon the blood of all

our fears, took only coffins
carved with runes,
took only the shadows
of a calligraphy marred upon ten thousand bronze
lipped reeds, devoured like dry bones
in a desert, thunder-starved.

A thought my love cannot be killed by
fire or water or the bloody velvet hand of war.
If every word I speak
was silenced in an ignorant
night clothed in all my nightmares
nothing would be lost.
If every thought was snapped from
my mind and set to shadowed flame
in the alleys of history,
even then nothing would be lost.

For my God, you collect each thought
like the dew of rain and carry it to our
resting place
to awaken our naked souls
and release us from the grave
of these empty sleep-filled lives.

THE RED LION

Out of the incense of our songs is but the echo,
but the shadow of his gaze out of his whispering
has creation come, and from his thunder where shall
depart the world?

Of infinity and to infinity is but the merest shadow;
the shadow of his eye
shuts out the light of stars.

He is as a red lion in a thunder-wearied land,
older than El-Doni, greater than the crimson
clothed forests of Remaliah
where began the worlds of man.
He is greater than those trees
as they climb into the sky like angels lost
in wings and sighs.

From his tongue shall come the ruin and
restoration of the worlds; even Remaliah in his gaze
shall flee along his tongue's edge,
fade, and at last, come to be.

ILYRRA

Your wings hold creation in their shadow,
and on the plains bejewelled
        with lotus dew, all our dreams
unfinished hold council
like burnt air upon your lips,
                and from our dreams unfinished
        your voice takes hold
and bridges all the nighted ways
into a nameless song robbed of world or star,
adrift in the shadow of your wings.

Where the twin companions Pleasure
and Silence wander there I will take
                that best part of you Ilyrra
and carve your name as the death
        knell of the worlds we know and dare not know.

Ilyrra, let your name give birth
to these unnamed souls, these unnamed worlds
        which lurk beyond our vision,
for I too am lost, dear lover,
in your shadow, and beyond.

WHO ALL TO DEATH GO

Who all to death go
wait:
        patience those who take
up their burials
and pray.
        Death is rendered in its terror
by touching us, and lingering,
                before the final embrace.

ROKOR

"This is hell, nor am I out of it." Faustus.

All that is, is but a veil, my child. The sun
we see rests her head on black moth
        wings as we like children are lost
in this field of life
        caught beneath the eyes of night.

My God! You stand behind the veil, before the veil;
Vaai-Yaweh let us touch our days as they
        flee like darkened doves
into the place where no flesh goes,
                where the razor moons drip
lotus milk and Vathajra looses her
night-spun robes, and lets fly these rushing
worlds like needle-flies,
        blackening the rose-dyed air with
                fitful, glass-spun wings.

In Rokor my dreams are murdered
by their own dark tears; each cell of my
body a dream unto itself,
until I am murdered by all I am,
and like the sleeping sun
I shall recoil upon the petals
of the moon and forget,
oh god of my fathers let me forget that not all
are dreams in Rokor where the white night gleams.

SERPENT WOMEN GLITTER

Serpent women glitter when they
walk. Geography of nightmare
is written there, tattooed like

lost continents blackly about their
eyes. Wasp-leaf letters cast adrift a
white warm ocean of stone in

a sea of black cold sand
where serpent women
walk and glitter as they stand.

VADRY'S SONG

Sipping on cigarettes the fires obscure,
and eventually, only my breathing has any meaning
to me, sitting on a street corner
waiting for the frost to lessen,
letting every match burn fine and thin
before the flame is caught invisibly by the wind,
and snuffed out.

Only my breathing remains to comfort,
as the frost slowly thins even my breath,
and cigarettes burn softly and slow like the
sound of my heart, and then stops.

THE FIRES OF EIDON AND EIGON

Down in the fires of Eidon and Eigon,
down where the damned supposedly
tread, fire is the skin and the flesh they
wear. Fire is their sin.

Arnsara is the ocean
where the righteous tread and
the ocean is their skin, their flesh,
their songs. I'd dare any man trade
hell or heaven with such as them.

ON ANOTHER'S HAPPINESS

They have taken the darkness
from your eyes.
Now you are bright
as black sun was bright, for all too
brief a season and a time.
Wax-wood women
were much the same as you,
but in burning they charred.
Return
to what you were, not what you are.

VORALIS

Before the sacred flame, I bridge the tangible silence
with intangible shadows;
Voralis has blackened
and restored my eyes, as all
darkness descends into light.

There are isles beyond the western
sun, like jewels of amber cast upon the greater deep,
like jewels of wine
cast upon the petals of Vathajra's lips;

beneath a Dothrine sun robbed of light
Voralis treads upon those isles
clothed in the
memories of Acara's
sons, clothed in the dreams
of the sacred flame

as the worlds
bend to my voice and close the
doors of night behind them, led
by their lord Voralis as we cross
into black burnt cities beneath the shadow of the
moon's white wings.

I have drunk the wine of winter before the sacred flame,
I have become the worlds
even as I flee shard by shard into the consort of Day
and set aside all that I was, as the sun-gods
sleep upon the ocean of
the blade-burnt night
and dream that the worlds have fled at last
from their shadow and their shame
into the dreams of God, which I become.

Part II.

Lindwyrm

NATALIS SOLIS (The death
of the sun. A suicide.)

In her words was I
conceived, and like the child
of a naked
flame I blazed
serene beneath the shadow
of her wings.

Natalis Solis, mother, mother,
do not cry for me:
in your voice
was I conceived, and in my voice
I cease to be.

THE DREAM BOX

Into the bones of an ox, I leave my dreams;
his cathedral of being is made red with ink.
He is transformed into a box
which I hold in my hand as I open the lid
and let the full nightmare of my vision seep like amber
into my skull. And when I have let the full madness of the
moment
take hold of me then, and only then
do I shut the box and let the
dreams slip back into their place of rest.

THE LORD OF H'KEDRAN WOOD

In the briers of H'Kedran Wood, no man may speak
of days gone by for should they utter a remembered
sound than the lord of H'Kedran Wood will come
and strike such memories down
and ride again to a nameless town holding the tongue
of the speaker high as warning to all
not to forget his command that there is no day
beyond today and all the footsteps upon the sand shall depart
as our king has done, through the blade of H'Kedran's lord,
and all our songs unsung.

THE DISAPPEARANCE OF WESLEY BADGER

A forest covers all sins and all life's
strange pleasures. Wesley Badger walks into
the twilit undergrowth and is drawn
into the pleasures of his soul
which none will dare ever know.
His disappearance uncertain, his home unshed
and left as a second skin,
a husk of lost regrets and lost
occasions when his strange love seemed best.
And now he is gone
into the twilit undergrowth,
his whereabouts uncertain,
as are so many others.

EACH TO EACH

Each to each we stood
upon the shore, the waves crashed
into Eternity
until our memories
were no more, as we stood beside
the ocean's reach, still each
to each, to each.

SIORJARGAD

The dragon cries in winter
for her young, and in the
mountain reaches the spider-frost
runs thru the dragon Siorjargad,
runs thru the dragon's flesh
and burns her cries to ash
as the young of ageless eons
claws up from the frost and cleaves
its infant fires to the thirsting sun.

SHADOWS AT THE DOOR

Shadows at the door flow beneath my bed,
I feel them there; my eyes
don't break from watching them;
they found me the next day,
dead,
eyes open.

THE LORD HAKYMATHE

In the year of the worm Thyatis the
lord Hakymathe dared decree that the serpent
priests of Ith should cease their worship of
the worm and bow to him eternally.

And in the year of the worm Thyatis
the priests returned this challenge with that terrible
gift of their obedience and with the twisted
magics of their caste they weaved a spell
about their lord and made him that Devourer
of Time, made in him the worm Thyatis.
Then they bowed and worshipped him.

VASHTI ("And Vashti was cast from Xerxes'
court and Esther took her place.")

Who is say this was not my destiny,
to choose a failing path, to find a final end, and open
the doors for another to let her come in,
not because I was unworthy
but because I was needed by Him
to stand and make way for another,
to stand by the gates of the temple
and my failure redeem His children?

ARMADA

Silent save the hum of
a thousand mosquitos as I
wander this grassy plain.
Before me lay the hills,
behind me lay the cities,
and above me the ships
of the clouds have spread
their wings and began to fly.

THE MOUNTAINS OF EUHAITHGORM

We take of the world nothing, and leave as nothing,
imprinting but the merest glimpses of ourselves
upon the stones, like the crooked feet
of one who walked in clay
and turning back found the echoes of his steps
seemed not as steps but ineffable, indefinite shapes
no man with certainty could discern,
like the mountains of Euhaithgorm to the dwellers
of the mist, glimpsing all our lives before their incense
and their essence fades from us again.

A DARKER SHADE OF GREY

The afternoon falls to twilight
as I watch the fiery dragon clouds
on their flights to the lands of night,
for this sunlit vale goes
to shadowed rest in a shade of earth
too grey, and the clocks
they tick in a cricket's voice,
saying goodbye to day.

THE AUTUMN LAND

For the leaves turn brown
and the land hardens beneath my feet
in the country of red daylight,
and the river flows from the mouth
of the raging caves
to the sea, for it is but another
stream of time in the mind.

HER FINGERS DRIPPING WITH PERFUME

Her fingers dripping with perfume she stands
nude before the temple made by coarser hands
        and with proud yet obedient step she
mounts each tier
to the very top
                and then because it is expected
of her, she stops, looks down upon the crowd
of those whose olive-hued skin
        seem radiant in the sun
as she plunges the knife within
the victim's chest,
                fingers dripping with perfume
        and with blood as expectant people
with their masklike faces but
idiotly grin and cheer the coming rains to come.
                No tear is shed for priestess and for
        victim, who are one.

IN SLEEP

In sleep the bull's horns
and dulled, and I am safe even as he
murders me.
        But in this world all is
touch and motion and bull's horns
as sharpened as bittered words,
        sharp as a carpenter's nail.
Nightmares have not
the skins of men.

KARRAKATHA IN WINTER

Anviara stained her hands and into winter
Karrakatha walked thru the withered forest
crumpled neath the frost,
her hands stained red with ochre clay
as Anviara had instructed, as Anviara had demanded,
till Karrakatha walked in winter alone but never alone,
for the spirits of the frost walked with her,
touched but never touched the child,
touched but never harmed the child
Anviara cruelly spurned though she was the
daughter of the seer, daughter of prophetess and
prophesy.

Some day will she return thru the withered forests
crumpled neath the frost, when the winds heed her
voice and the moon has wept for her
then will come the seer's daughter
and blind the seer of prophesies, blind the future yet to be,
and dwell in summer all her days
where the winds have walked upon the grass
and the sun upon the sky, till the clay has bled from off
her hands like prophesy's dark wine.

THE RED LION THRONE

Meiclea sits unsteady on the red lion
throne and will not yield the crown
even to her daughter, even to Cadyrra,
til, knowing that
her daughter with her mother's cunning
would take what is her right
what can Meiclea do
but give away the red lion throne
knowing all the while unsteady sits
the one who chooses to sit down.

THE RAVENS OF AYRKEN

We become as isles in a bone-burnt
sea of ice, for grief tangles between our fingers
and prophesies hang crucified like the ravens
of Ayrken upon walls no longer white,
hanging uselessly like vine-cities from
the sky, tangling between our fingers in a bone-burnt
sea of ice, as we whimper secretly to know
the death of paradise profaned.

CARMILLA MORDREAU

That girl has her reasons to sit and talk
to the shadows like they were her friends;
don't we all?
Dark rooms are like the womb,
so why wouldn't she retreat every now and then,
her feet cloven like a devil's foot anyway,

who could blame her if darkness is her comfort
when even gold seems to avoid her touch,
as if her touch could tarnish the base metal
somehow, as if gold were tortured by her touch?

The girl has her reasons, but she'll come around.
God may make his minor mistakes, but I don't. I heal
what even he fails to heal.
Give her time. Show her that we
are friends and companions of darkness too.

THE FOUR SHADES OF THE GARDEN

Walking through the asylum's garden
he stood and watched as his mind became fluid in its
thought, watching as the roses cut into one another's
flesh, watching as the purple leaves fall,
weeping of past greatness,
watching as the grey grass pray fitfully
to unknown gods they be untrampled,
watching as black trees stand rigid in their frightful
logic, that logic which had become his tomb.

TIROVA

Tirova stone jungle
where tiger women sleep,
where fists find their symmetries
amid sharp grey leaves

and lies are rendered holy
when the truth is all we have

where grey sharp leaves bite down
on us as tiger women sleep.

ONIDEKA

Never give to the fragile
tree the dulled ax,
Onideka.
Never give sunlight
to the burnt frost.

To break the
slenderest twig with the
slightest effort
is no task.
To break a twig
with a machete betrays
the machete's wielder.

BELZAEL

When from God's lips you above all were born,
through sin you ripen righteousness into a deep velvet wine,
dark beyond measure, black beyond Lucifer's soul.
In Tarnrial, at Kareah on the Bronze Sea, there
from you I caught Death's song like some damned disease.
With stone and wind and the bronze shore like a corpse's
breath above the world's lips shall arise my
song, and mingle with your song, and hers:
then only the dying roots of stone shall know
our names, at Kareah on the Bronze Sea.

IN DARKLY SACRED EOLRAC

In darkly sacred Eolrac behind walls
which are not walls I will blanket you with dusty kisses
as the sun unravels her sins of light
and my lies both beautiful and diseased
fall like scales of amber from my eyes, as my lips to your lips
are pressed, your love pressed like wax
upon the surface of my soul,
as the moon has burnt her echo upon the
echoed silence of our sleep, in darkly sacred
Eolrac behind walls which
are not walls, but shadows all.

THE LOVESONG OF C. H. GEDYN

Given that last year to live, watching his days
burn down one by one like cigarette stubs he thinks but
briefly upon those gross fears,
buried in a coffin, interred to the earth.
And it isn't dying that makes him scream in the night,
it is the thought of waking up and finding himself
in his coffin alone and empty
but still alive, as those cigarettes seem to burn
ever so slowly, ever so fine.

HER STOMACH IS A PATCH OF SUNLIGHT NEVER WAVERING

Her stomach is a patch of sunlight
never wavering. Moving on her jungle body
always is that tender patch of skin,
naked and bare.
I stroke her,
claws but inches from my eyes,
as she strums upon my humanity
with starving sighs, finding fault
with my mortal guise.

I am in the service of a lady of the world.
Give me strength, oh Xhalgazi, make of me
a man ripe for the birthing of the nations.

I AM BORN

I am born from the crypt in the grave,
in the flowers and the grass that feed off my flesh.
I am born in the animals who feed
off the grass. I am born in the hunter
who shot the game. Born in the wife who
killed the hunter. Born and reborn until I
become the woman who was my wife
as she places flowers at my tomb.

SIAMESE FIGHTING FISH

When we war, my wife and I,
like warriors from an older world, there is
no parry equal to her tireless strike,
even as she falls.
And when she falls
I pick her up, as she sears her claws
along my skin, along the edges of my hands.
And she is so beautiful and
our war so old that should she die
I must follow her so that heaven
may follow behind me,
to where my love has gone.

THE LADY IN WAITING

In the corner the mouse has begun to stir.
Rising from her world of sunless rooms she moves
across the floor and absently regards the tapestry,
each strand slowly unravelling like
curling smoke down sun-starved walls,
falling like a green waterfall before
crumpling to the tiles, where it dares not rise
again. The mouse returns to her sun-dead dwelling,
and sleeps contentedly, till the fall of night.

I WAS DANJAL

I was Danjal, cast amongst the fallen before the
days of Noah, who took a woman as my love
above my God, cursed to watch her drown
and die like all the ashes of my hope.
I was Tarquin, who raped Lucretia,
and brought an end to my dynasty, my descendants,
and all hope for the future, ending the age of kings.
I was Accalon,
Morgan's lover, who plotted the end
of Camelot, to the end of a golden age,
and was slain by Arthur in a fit of rage,
befitting his God more than mine.
At every turn of the age I return
and play Grendel or Danjal, Cetus
or a tyrant's reign. I must be slain
by men more worthy than I
for I loved a woman more than my God
and loved my passions more than pride.

I was first amongst the fallen,
last in the line of kings,
cursed with this final betrayal,
my failure as the villain in God's play.

THE BOTTLE

Hold a bottle clear and white,
or opaque in your hands. There is no
difference in the thought, fleeting as it is,
the fear to be encased in glass
and have some omnipotent thing
watch over you with all the clinical calm
of something who holds your fate too tightly
and will never let you go.
That is hell I'm sure, to be in a little
glass bottle, or a jar.

MERYLD AT ABYDOS

The sphinx upon my shadow falls in
that temple perfume stained,
in those bronze reaches pillared with the dawn
and air for the air herself ordained
of Abydos that bridge to man, and here the sphinx
softly treads, mute as secrets,
soft as that riddle Oedipus sought before
the sphinx had murdered her shadow
upon the stones, and there in that temple still I clutch
the very wind and cry, Mother abandon me not!
The sphinx hungers on more than words and air.

THE BALLAD OF ARIADNE ATHRADEI

I. The Hunter of Souls to Chaledo came
to claim Ariadne Athradei, the Maker of Men, and
silence her then from Chaledo,
where men had been slain.

II. In towers of crimson plague's shadow
is wed, the halls have been stained as the Hunter
of Souls to Chaledo has come,
and blood has been shed.

III. Ariadne Athradei, the Maker of Men, in her
tower waits and weaves her webs, plots each life
with a spider's deceit, each life she made
and broke on love's wheel,
fickle as the cross when the cross fails.

IV. The Hunter of Souls thru the gates have come
and covered the world in his shadow. Ariadne Athradei
to her throat has she clasped, and silenced
her life to an echo.

V. The Hunter of Souls to his cloak does he gaze,
black as the tar at El-Faryn. On it is written
a thousand dark faces
but one alone does he linger before,
the face of Ariadne Athradei. Then he ascends
to the thrones of the kings and smashes the thrones
altogether. After is but the silence which
comes when the world is made silent together.

CORCORAN ASMODEUS

I. My enemy conspires against me for beauty
fades but the soul never does,
beauty becomes what the soul never does
and I am no Narcissus,
I am no Narcissus, but a soul.

II. Greedy and bloated are my bones,
my body the waste of what I was,
for love fades but the soul never does,
love becomes what the soul never does
and I am no Apollo ringed with gold,
I am but the soul of what
I should have been, greedy and bloated
bones, a soul, and nothing more.

III. I am Asmodeus, I am the spider
and the web, ugly and bloated as the reeds
which clung about Narcissus,
twisted as the weeds that hung
suspended from Apollo's hand for beauty fades
and love fades but the soul never does,
it never can become but my enemy
in this savaged, twisted land, this land
made in the image of my father and I
dutiful and sullen as Achilles, impotent
and sullen in my sins,
for Asmodeus is my name, Asmodeus is my sin.
I can be no more than the man I am.

I TRACE A PENTAGRAM IN THE DUST

I trace a pentagram in the dust, a witch's sign,
a sight sublime, but emptied of all meaning
what are five points, five lines,
what is the reason I should fear five points, five lines?

I trace a swastika in the dust, a crooked
cross in a crooked place, I trace the sign of a crooked mind,
but devoid of shadow, thought, or race
what are eight lines, a crooked cross,
what reason should I fear eight lines?

I trace a cross upon the sands,
two lines diverged, and two lines met at mutual ground.
Who am I to fear two lines upon the sands,
bloodless lines from bloodied, nail-eaten hands
laying nakedly upon a bloodless shore;
what must I fear from two lines and nothing more?

I trace with chalk the body of a child,
cruelly her eyes are open but she does not smile.
I trace her form and nothing more, no hint of
her anguished face, her dress,
her skin unnaturally torn; how can two lines,
five points, a crooked cross
evoke the greater fear than hers?

THE SERPENT QUEEN

I. Through a world of thorns turned inwardly
toward some blackened pregnancy the Serpent Queen
was born. Each thorn sought her unnatural blood
but some strange alchemy unknown held
back their claws and so to life was she allowed
a small respite, and life its long imprisonment was granted her.

II. In birth was she abandoned to the world,
amongst the sons of men, she sought no company,
amongst the daughters of women was she reviled,
and in exile did her shadow
fall amongst the sons of men, the
daughters of women, silencing them all.

III. Across the Afric shore she comes
as scales of lapis lazuli fall like omens afterward
revealed, until the thorns at last release
her from her imprisonment
and she returns again to whatever wise
or unnatural god had sired her, in vain.

THE DREADNOUGHTS OF THE SKY

The dreadnoughts sailed the azure sky
striding out beneath the sunlit shade,
hunters amongst the heavens high forged
of steel as a sharpened blade,

beside them the zeppelins
of the dawn and ships of the emerald glade,
as all the realms of the moon
are gone beneath the sunlit shade.

SPARROWCLOCK

There are no secrets in Sparrowclock,
each secret like a cornered animal is rounded up,
each adultery is notarized, every word unsaid
is gathered to a bitterness black as tar,

every high school athlete worth his weight
is made hero for a time, but when those secrets
as bricks pile about them all,
those gross secrets of boys in backseats

with or without their sweethearts,
then what escape is there but to still your breast
and win and win and win, for if you fail but once
than Sparrowclock will sound

and leave all heroes in the dust as men
bitter with the taste of men who loved them not
more than their own sadly exposed secrets instead.

VOLSCIA'S DAUGHTER

A serpent steps upon the page, veiled
as a virgin and timidly she falls and with each fain
ephemeral fault
to touch her fingers upon the page
there I write of her who fell,
daughter of Volscia who spoke in blood,
blood of the poet stained before thee still.

A MURDER IN SANNENBURG

Well, Coriander, the deed is done.
Perhaps I should have been better loved
but this is Sannenburg and you always
had to keep yourself so safe,
what could I have been but a burden?

You showed me that army blade of yours,
and when with savage step you walked away
from me, when you walked from our mutual
Esdraelon / place of war, what could I be
but a burden
so let me burden you, my love;
the blade was yours and they will come
and put you safer than where I was with you,
and only you and I will know
the truth of what I've done.

FOR LITTLE ELISE ARITHYS

Come with me little girl, Elise, take my hand
and we'll go off together
you and I
where no one will disturb us,
we'll go off together where the stones
will give no witness
and afterward
the shadows will lick my hands.

ON THE BANKS OF THE IMARLYND
THE GHOST OF MORLAKE

Mr. Uldaris, Mr. Maldus, there on the banks
of the Imarlynd that's where I saw her first,
I swear. No, the blade I never saw,
nor is that blood mine or hers.
It must be the ghost of Morlake, I swear,
but she's in the wrong place I know.

Yes, Mr. Uldaris, yes, Mr. Maldus,
I knew a girl much like her, and I'm sure now
she loved me well, that is to say I loved her too,
I'm sure. And she's out there,
that ghost of Morlake though she's in the wrong
place it must be her, or else you're right,
Mr. Uldaris, Mr. Maldus, in jealousies
for a love unknown I murdered her to own her
love alone. Or maybe I just murdered her
for no reason at all. I don't know.

CHIACA SHALL IN UZAL SIT

Chiaca shall in Uzal sit
as the sun throws back her
ambered spear
and the moon his shield
of jade is lit against Chiaca,
and this too shall save.

THE CHILDREN OF ACARA

I. Where the grey horses of Morbia run,
where the moon's bright wings have ceased,
where Vejara's tears have made the heavens weep
there I will find Acara's children.

II. In all the burning cities of our dreams
I shall stalk the Culgulareu beast and feast upon
these decades rendered husks
in Rokhaz on a golden Nile which
flows from Axesra's lips as the Winter Witch
feeds on the dark unwild
of our elder souls.

III. I stand upon the centre and the edge
as Nialus like a Norn casts up these days like
stones. Oh, let me break my body
upon your stones
and words Keziah, Myagana, all your
sisters in my birth feed on the labour of my first
word as I come amongst Acara's sons,
amongst Acara's daughters.

IV. Nohpele your mistress Winter calls and
let us follow to where the sky has touched the lips
of God, and the wind like a ghost of flame
settles upon us, breaking the
tender silence of a passion burned. Let us be but
the echo of the voice of God.

V. Watch them come clothed in silver,
as the worlds pay homage to Acara's sons, to
Acara's daughters. Khire has placed his
voice in Hacala's soul
as Ehaat like a consort of the blade
rises on the knife's edge of the sun and carves
worlds according to his vision,
until Creation resounds with his whittling,
with the shattering of wings,
until only the Culgulareu beast
is heard, feasted upon by Ehaat's tender sons.

VI. I am the centre and the edge as Acara
throws open the doors of dawn, and I am swept
in the vision of her dreams. And in her
dreams Elithyra, like the crow of some
tattered king rises above the waves of
the elder world, as Nialus and her sisters,
first of Acara's children, weave those
strands of unfinished worlds into this single
isle of cool flame and wasp green trees,
until it has become Voralis' domain.

VII. And in his likeness did Acara bridge
his flesh with this cold bronze flesh of the ocean's
child, and so create all that would be
and had ever been. And where Acara's voice
was caught upon the isle, there did crimson-haired
children of her being ascend and claim the
worlds according to their vision.

VIII. Ryolis and Knyare I stand between,
the cities of the gods asleep awake. And where
they die shall we arise Kyathalis,
and light Creation with Acara's memory
as we stalk the echo of the Culgulareu beast
in the burnt-black cities of our dreams.

Let me but remember Acara's sons,
Acara's daughters, as the vision fades and
the dream dreams, off beneath
the shadow of the moon's bright wings.

KNIGHTS OF THE CLOUDS

In ages past before the days of Hitler, Europe
stood in wretched death and war men would mount
their steel dragonflies and pray to God that the magic
of their flying ships not fail, as they
skimmed the dung-coloured sky,
waiting one way or another to die.

One such man with sandy-coloured hair
while travelling the unknown routes of cloud knights
and sky barons met against a rival
of the air. Machine guns hummed like engines
as they passed by in the dance of death
neither would give up.
A bullet hit his arm as the craft sped by.
This would be the way he would die.

"Never!" he screamed to heaven and hell
as he turned his craft in a maddening sweep, guns
racing out like tendrils of fire, puncturing
the engine of his rival, seeing
the fear on his face as the craft went
into a nose dive. It never pulled up.

THE SCYTHE

What if all the crimes we'd ever done
today or yesterday or the days yet to come
were given back to us, a single sentence
all, that of our deaths and nothing more?

Or better, to have each crime its own
allotment, its own small place in a great wheel,
and whether the crime was ours
or another our number and our lot must bear
the burden of that sentence however cruelly sought
by laws both blind and harsh.

Why then, would not those
chance escapes, those unwanted,
furtive souls be seen
in a second light,
as the police do not
their jobs but let run the guilty,
and so, fulfil their roles,
to protect the innocent?

ADALUSA

My fear is as a wingless bird,
it cannot help but nest near me.
Adalusa,
were that we had wings
it would not matter where
our fears nest,
we would be gone from them.

THE REISHA'S DANCE

He bids me rise, his hand outstretched,
and so, I rise and begin, but only at his pleasure
and his whim.
But then as the motion and the rhythm
of the lyre and song pass thru me, when the opal court
and the ivoried pillars pass and are gone,
when the crown and the throne and the world
pass and are gone,
then I truly dance,
and there is no manner and no rhythm but the
beating of my heart as my hands flutter,
as my heart flutters and my legs coil and curve
but to the song and this is my only
audience. The song is my mirror.

I only return to my king's hand and sit
by my master and my lord when I am sated.
In this, I have no master. Here I am free.

STRIP ME BARE IN A LAND WITHOUT SECRETS

Strip me bare in a land without
secrets on some damned winding plain.
Strip me bare
and leave me where
no shadows are,
nor neath the light once passing
which has passed and gone.

FLETCHER PEEL

Down walked Fletcher Peel and each eye
upon him fell. Here stood man made sentinel over all

he espied, each child he bore
obedient and in awe, his wives of years past
and present left to tend their broods
and with that trust which comes from looking in his eyes
they left all matters in his manicured hands,
knowing him the avatar of their fate.

Down walked Fletcher Peel, a slender stain
of blood along his cheek, and like all of a thousand
subtleties unexamined and unexplained,
(the disappearance of a boy he fancied,
the silence of a girl stilled and divorced from speech
but not from pain,
stains left unexplained
but obediently washed by hands obediently bound
and broken to their contented fates,)
down walked Fletcher Peel from his child's
now empty bed and they all ate together.

Part III.

Tiamat

IT HAD A LOVELY FACE

I. It had a lovely face,
my little human dove with the strange, scared eyes,
so like a spider, still as stone, like silkworms
and talon bones, a child of the worm was she,
and I her son of stone.

II. We sailed on a barge of thorns down
a sunless stream as the skin beneath my skin contracts
there upon the ageless water with the daughter
I have dreamed, and my mother
still as stone, her eyes drowned in fear,
my little human dove no tear shall shed for my daughter
or for me, raped upon a flaming wheel of her once gleamed
humanity, lost as dreams in dreams.

THE JEWISH CHOCOLATE POEM

"Jewish chocolate decorates the forum,
and from it, Rome is fed."

When your Maker's years
slip like sand and Christ
is lost in the maze of his mother's
womb, when fishers
cast their nets on one
side only and all kneel their knees to Rome
then Jews will decorate their synagogues
and feel no threat
to claim their doors, for what is lost
is gained, what is unmade is made.

THE ISLE OF GOGARITH

I. There's an island made of Circe's memory
which makes of men beasts made crooked
in the forms of men,
and they are caged upon that isle
held rigid in a sea of flame, caged in fire
and flesh not their own nor
of their making,
beasts as men clothed in the
minds of beasts, on the Isle of
Gogarith, captive of their natures.

II. There is a Lady of the World upon the isle,
ringed thrice with men their minds as those of beasts
as half-mockingly she taunts her prey
before she stills their hearts of care
and places beasts again in the forms of beasts
and men their minds
in a sea of flame made resting place
for they who dared to wander
where demons and their familiars wander,
shadowed in their shade.

SONEN AND DAELA

I. Beneath L'khas'ri's fire two lovers sit in silence,
Sonen and Daela and Alria, their slave. Beneath
a blood-fired moon two lovers sit
in silence, pondering their forms, the illusions
of the flesh which twists upon their love Love's dark illusion.
On couches of ivory are carved strange lusting gods
and there upon the couches
sit Sonen and Daela as Alria
stands beside them beneath L'khas'ri's fire
where T'lluc also rises, dark as Love's illusion.

II. *In Morcah where the world is grey, I looked*
upon the sacred fire, I looked upon the jade-dark moon
and heard its bestial growl. In Bisia
where lusting gods have raped from blood
their very voices and their silvered songs
I found I longed but for the jade-dark moon
when L'khas'ri's fire had gone.

III. *But I am old and my sins are old*
and upon two worlds I stand, as Sonen and Daela
in silence ponder Love's dark illusion,
as I have fled to the worlds I knew
and they to the world hereafter, poisoned by my hand,
by my love for them long cold.

ARELYTH

Arelyth, must we like idiot kings
sit among the cold stones at Narfar
and Aeldred?

I know what we
must do brother; we will bind our
hands against the walls
and so become the walls.
We will bind our tongues upon
the night and so become the night.

And when we are walls
and night we will escape into
an elder space, and know not death.

THE NATURE OF THE BEAST

I sit and study the nature of the beast,
imprisoned behind a jar
        small as my fist, as it sits
and studies me with the cool hatred
of a serpent as she kisses
        her venom into invisible wounds
or as a man stares who has watched
the devil pass and with the twist
of a daggered-thought
        wishes to sit in the devil's place
and be the lord of all he knows, unhindered
by natural restraint, as he gnaws
        on the bones of his captivity and watches
the nature of another kindred beast unfolds.

THE MEDUSA IN THE LABYRINTH

In the darkness she waits, fearful lest
her sight find one who with a silenced scream
shall force the walls grow closer to her
as flesh to stone is made.

So, with each step, she wanders, shutting
both her eyes, remembering her sunless world
before the gods with savage eye
rendered her a woman with a
demon's face for no crime but her seeking
for the light.

Then before her seems a flame, shod of fear
she stands before and with the resignation of the damned
she opens both her eyes,
smiling in her fatal defeat,
for not a tear is shed nor does she
speak save a whisper of forgiveness for herself
and all the dead
as without a moment's dread
she opens both her eyes again
and is murdered by the mirror.

AVASHAMADISH

There is a subtle conceit in those
who worship Avashamadish, who lay
down their laws
clothed in a god's words,
who bury their love
in the cynic's curse to brand
all gods but flail and cross
before the multitude who starve
for the lips of a god's loving kiss.

What pity when the idols speak
and the priests once so bold are
rendered dumb
before they whom they
have falsely served.

B'CODJOVA

The fury after the storm; B'codjova
sitting in his chair, rage tapering through him
like needles or spines,
till softened by of all things the thought
of his own self snuffed out through this child of his,
this seed of his hate,
he stills all and picks me up and forgives
all I've done through my childish ways
when I was young.

NATURE HAS NO CONSCIENCE

"Nature has no conscience"
said the spider to the fly,
sitting in her web so scarlet white,

waiting for the fly and her ambered eye,
whittling 'pon the moments before the feast
begins.

"Nature has no conscience," said the spider
to the fly. Said the fly to the spider, "That's alright."

AT AIDEAN

I scoured the edges of U'talna
and the hills made mockery of my cries.
Born from suffering my lineaments gave way,
broken I fell through U'talna's cratered floor,
long had the flames there ceased.

Broken I fell to Aidean, to the place
where flame lingers no longer, where the moth
is spent of hunting her death and the grass
is bright with laughter from the whisperings
of my children as yet unborn.

WORLDS OF SAND AND ZIGGURATS

Worlds of sand and ziggurats
stretch like
perverse shadows
up into the sky, murdering the
emptiness with their
leviathan thunder-march
amongst the clouds.
And where the gods have laid
their futures there Jairus we hunted
the unborn ages
and like the gods were we,
if only for a season.
We were the lords
of midnight suns, the stars like a ring
of eternity placed about our throats
before the womb caught us in her lies
and we like demons
vanished from the air, to be born
into this monstrous world,
smothered by our
mother's hope-filled cries.

HYLLAR

To Hyllar; the jewel was received
well enough. When I meet you
I'm sure we will get along.
The wedding arrangements are set.
My name is Chylun and I trust
you will find me handsome.
The jewel was precious enough
for me to believe you precious
also. I expect you in three days.
Don't disappoint.

SALCADIS

A little girl Salcadis
knew and teaching her his
wisdom did she become hard
and bitter as the cross,
cruel as needed be.

A little worm the girl
knew and teaching it all the
things she learned the
worm bit down on Salcadis'
wisdom, and his heel.

JONARDA

I went to Jonarda because my priest was dead,
I went to the city of Praelym.
I stopped and let fly on white streets
but a little the sorrows I bore,
because my priest was dead and I'd need another.

I needed a priest, not that I'd listen to whatever he'd say
but only to mask whatever I was
neath the hollow embrace of some righteous man,
and so hidden in view of all of the world
I can sin and still sin with my impunity.

IS THAT THE OCEAN OR THE SKY

"Is that the ocean or the sky," cried the little
boy, staring through those sterile windows
from his dome of glass and ice.
"It is neither," said his father, staring
over his small shoulder. "It is only
the holograms, and the light."

KZARDRU

Upon the sands
upon the sands his
and the wastes
all directions
the blood
gives to the thirst
his tithe of blood
walks away
back to me

Kzardru crucified his hands
wings are crucified
of Kahlia stretch in
as Kzardru wipes
from off his skin
and the seas of thirst
and into the wilderness
never once turning
or what he'd done.

SEJANUS' TRAITOROUS TONGUE

He bids me speak honestly. And so I speak,
say what is in my heart regarding war and
the end of war, lay before him our chances

and our failure at the hands of lesser, but
more capable men who have dared to call us
weak. Today he is unhappy with all I've said,

slaps me across the face, cuts my hand
with the knife he was using to peel an
orange with. I am a traitor in his eyes

for the truths I've said to him. But all
the heroes are dead my liege, so you'll
have to rely on traitors instead.

SMALL MEN

You pressed us into lives and we obeyed,
married women not of our choosing,
obeyed the duties infringed on us,
listened to everything that you had made
and never once complained,
because we could only complain to you
and you never listened to what we had to say.
Hitler was a man like one of us; Stalin knew what we
were forced to know. The world is opened
wide for the mad king's show,
the world obeys the cruel and cruelly learns.
But I am not a rebel and I am no martyr.
I'll take my duty up and curse it, but still, I'll take it up.

THE NAKKHAJ

It is just a little brutality to pour
on the Nakkhaj's head our sufferings to her.
Zaneresset said the Nakkhaj deserved
to be a Nakkhaj because we could
and she could not rebel from him.

Why then Father, why did you let
her pour out your wine into our cups as we
drank, and didn't notice her smiling? Why
did you leave the hemlock like
an inviting new-found bliss upon the vine?

TAR-BABY

Tar-baby girl silver eyes black and grey,
you stroll up from the shadows
pooling on the street,
slide
carefully
over
to
me,
saying nothing,
wrap arms slender
as smoke
around my waist,
kiss me tender,
linger there
softly forgetting life in every breath,

but afterward, you'll never
let me go,
won't know how to break away,
hope that maybe I can be
the one

who'll leave you standing there,
in shadow, light, loss and rain,
but I can't
stay
away,
and we both know we are the
makings of our pain.

THE COLD PLAGUE

I'm freezing inside, burning like lyme,
walking on streets melted to glass
as the sun hangs heavily like a leering
long crimson eye
and I would touch it if I could,
blaze briefly in the bright burnt flesh
of flame and cease to be in pain,
or cease to be.

FLIES

Flies could never understand the nature
of glass, so they'd blunt their wings crashing
through, or trying to crash through
they'd ruin their bodies, break them softly,
the tired armour of their skin
bending from the strain. But then, after
they'd fallen to the ground for some reason
we couldn't understand they'd get up,
find the glass again, and start another
sparring match with the unmovable boundary.

We worked in an office with tunnels
for corridors and no window to look out
into the world, and every day our boss would
yell at us, often for no reason except that
he could and we couldn't stop him,
not without losing our jobs,
which none of us, not the woman
with children to feed or the alcoholic

with his craving or me who'd rather be here
than on the streets, could afford to lose.
At least flies tried. If only people did the same.

SEVEN-FINGERED HANDS

Seven-fingered hands outstretched for a sign of pity
and regret, a girl is crying, and her hands are spread out to any
who'll show her pity
but they all walk away down streets that lead to places
she'll never go, and no one stops to save her because of her seven-
fingered hands.
But then again, she can't reach out to those who come
unless she opens herself to them, and no one she has ever met
responds to her
if her hands are clenched, and no one
hopes to help the one who only has her hands as fists.

THE SCANDAL UNION

I can almost imagine it. Think about
all those people with something to hide,
why couldn't they all just work together,

hide each other's secrets without ever
knowing what they are hiding, keep
everything from everyone

until everything is safe? Why wouldn't
that make sense with all the things we
have to hide from everyone?

And all it would take is perfect trust
among people who feel the need to hide
whatever they've done, or said, or lied

about, or not lied about. Yes, all it would
take is trust to keep the hidden, hidden. Why
wouldn't such a perfect system thrive?

THE TIGER

Wires run thru him, touch the secret places,
and the lightning comes running up behind the pain.
Sluglike he's waiting, slumped in his prison,
claws bent back humanlike for a sign of pity,
and then he groans, sputtering every obscenity,
and he moans afterward, before a boy whispers, half
in awe and half in pity "a talking tiger,"
as the lightning thru him runs again
and he screams obscenities, while the boy walks away,
looking for other friends to make, not knowing why.

THALGREN AND PRAELOR

I. In the city by the sea the cops are
playing sad, brief games, trying hard to see the
shame of crimes they've made but are too
afraid to admit as crimes by the smoke-coloured
shore, and so they go on plying their trade,
killing their hearts, beating their breasts
like an aged whore at dusk.

II. At the hotel De Algiric Praelor is
teaching his son the trade, slicing off the skin
of a negro's hand because he got too close
for comfort's sake,
and the boy, too young to understand,
trying to please his father does what he can,
even though he's too young to understand.

III. Thalgren is listening to his wife's womb,
wondering which one of his men got there before
him, listening to his daughter groan
and wondering if he could cut her
out of there, and leave the husk
of the woman he once loved behind.

IV. Praelor is standing on the street, with
his son beside him, learning the family trade . . .
until the bullet falls upon him,
fired from Thalgren's hand . . .
Ralphy boy is lying in the street, a gunshot
to the chest, Praelor is beside him, cradling his defeat . . .

Death looms like a demon that has no fill
of blood, as Thalgren and his men arrest the ones
they've caught, but can't arrest the things they've done,
in the city by the sea, by the smoke-coloured shore.
Boy, listen to me. The cops break up the rackets and
make rackets of their own.

PARIS IN SPRING

I. Out of my window looking down
onto the open square people are walking,
looking about, people are
smiling with a dead grey stare and
in the alleys dark and deep the prostitutes
are waiting, lips white with cholera
as the judges stop by to say hello before
they groan and fall asleep, without a care.

II. Pigeons are flying all about the
flag with its eye turned to me, the flag
is watching everything, the black rag
fluttering on the breeze with its eye,
its secret eye looking thru my transparent
skin, as the pigeons stop and dine and then
begin to film our crimes with the cameras
of their minds, and our sins.

III. My typewriter with its keys like
upraised coins, its letters gazing up at me,
my typewriter crawling on a spider's
conceit groping for a meaning
and a metaphor, until I open wide the
door and the room is torn apart, the gallows
world with its secret heart bleeds
out into laughter's fire,

but I have secrets older than desire,
as the rose and its thorn cut a line along my
lips and I let my fingertips
burn with blood, and then no more
is the room torn in half or the world in madness
torn, as I feel that I am born
and sit by my typewriter which now is
still and like the raven with its wing I never stop
for anything until the ink has dried
and died and I have finished my design;
I call it "Paris in Spring."

THE GLORY OF EDEN

We opened the doors of our craft
and a new world opened with all the
glory of Eden. My crew ran like children
to touch the green but I remained to
watch. I couldn't join them. The green
of the forest scared me. Just as well. That night
half of us died from eating poisoned fruit.

MY LOVER HAS AN ARM OF SILVER

My lover has an arm of silver, I
a hand of gold. It moves of its own accord,
her arm goes crawling
on its own and she can't feel
it moving till her fingers brush past
her face,
but her fingers don't feel
and all she feels is cold.
My hand moves to hers, embrace,
but we don't feel until
my hand and her hand
also touch. Then it's real.

SPIDER'S STEPCHILDREN

Spider had some stepchildren,
one of them a fly.

Spider said to his daughter
go and fetch some water.

The little daughter, the tiny
fly went and got some water,

gave it to her mother's sons,
gave it to spider's other daughters,
gave up all the water, till she went
dry. *"Now let's have some supper,"*

said spider to the fly.

THE GREAT CONDUCTOR GYFRAG

The music is the last thing you notice.
Actually, the music is completely ignored once
Gyfrag begins his compositions.

You sit in the theater, the lights go down,
the stage is before you but the stage isn't what
fixes your attention.

Gyfrag. A wizened twig thin man
with a mane of hair shock white, fingers thin
and long as great lengths of wire,

eyes deep-set and saucer wide
is standing before you, wearing a tuxedo
perfectly pressed, perfectly neat,
and then

he raises his arms in the triumphant
movements of a man so deeply engrossed in his
work he never once considers we are even there.

Of course, music is playing, and from
what I'm told it is extremely good but the
music seems to fade as we all watch
this being,

this walking shadow of a man
move and twist and rise and fall and never
once can we take our eyes off of him, until
the performance ends

and the trance is broken. And afterward
when he stands amid the audience and asks
how was the performance, what else

can we say but breathtaking to behold?

As for his music, only the blind can tell.

TAAL SYRROW

Curling about like smoke
Taal Syrrow comes to me,
her skin
slides against the wall,
her body crumples to the floor,

taunt like corset wires
her face contracts,
bends and breaks
and I am broken by her stare,
crucified
on the secret knowledge she regretfully brings.

THE MOON CAT

Goodnight moon says the moon cat
standing by her little fence, goodbye night
and have a rest as I swallow up the sun,
as I run thru field and grass

my fur the colour of silver like the
clouds which pass after a summer storm.
Goodnight for now but soon I'll cough
you up again, let the daylight in

but I am a moon cat after all, so
it won't last. Hello moon, my friend.

MOUSE GOODBOY

"Mouse Goodboy in the tall
grasses, where are you going,
what are you after?"

*"I'm going to find some corn and
some barley, going to find some
wheat and some hay, going to get
a nice tasty meal and some
bright laughter all of the day."*

"Where will you get a nice tasty
meal and some bright laughter
all of the day?

*"In the barn of the miser, I'll take
what I need, eat all the wheat
and barley seed."*

"What if the miser catches your
doings, what if the rich man
knows what you're after?"

*"It won't be no loss, it might
even please me, letting them
know what I take when I'm
able, letting them see how
good and how grateful I am
when I come round about
when I can."*

"Mouse Goodboy is going
thru the long grasses, a twig
in his teeth and a smile on
his face, going to take from
the miser and rich man
all he can take with his
wonderful grace, grace of
the thief who knows what
he's after, wheat and barley
seed, hay, and bright laughter."

THE SUNLESS ROOMS ARE SLOPING TOWARD ENTROPY

The sunless rooms are sloping toward entropy
but because we never see we never know.
We can't tell day from night or the sunset
from the shadow and we can't remember
rain beyond the sounds that it once gave
before it was ignored, obliterated, and reborn.

The sunless rooms are twisting but we can't
escape the vertigo and we can't understand
why the world seems so small, but because
we live in sunless rooms we can't escape
our sunless selves, and even if the sun escaped
into our world would we embrace the light or
consider it nothing more than the coming storm?

LINES AND COLOURS SOFTLY FLOW

Lines and colours softly flow
and this I know that in the end
there is but hate even in the
messages of love I send.

BUTTERFLIES AND FIRE WINE

Must you little servants of high heaven tempt
hell most cruel with your flight thru its caverned
under reaches, sailing on your fragile feather-thin
wings thru the valleys of the dread king
as he sits and ponders all that he has made

till you reach the other side and enter again the
lands of paradise where you drink of fire wine

and angels still attend, who can't conceive of hell or
earth but only their short and stunted view of heaven?

IN THE COOL OF THE EVENING

In the cool of the evening
I feel the shadow cross my path
and in its vulnerable
penance upon the grass
I watch her crawl
to me and as she reaches
at my feet I feel the cool evening
winds grow still, and stop, and die.

EIGHTY SPIDERLINGS

I. I found on a window sill eighty
spiderlings making their silken
roads. I took my hand and

reaching in drew up thirty in a single
act, so many tiny lives I carried out

and laid amongst the grass.

II. A second time I reached in and thirty
more suspended clung from their threads

like inverted minarets or acrobats
hanging from my fingers and my thumb,
as I carried them beyond their home

and laid them carefully on the grass.

III. The last twenty I could not save
because my fingers could not reach, and
so, they fell in the raid which sought

out their oblivion. Twenty died and sixty
lived and odds as these are rare indeed:

who will save me when I bleed
and no one listens to my prayers?

THE MARTIAN TREE

Out on the crimson lands
is a tree that stretches to the stars,
carved of black leaves jagged as steel
bloodied by ochre
yellow as bile.
It stretches like a tower,
an alien twisted thing on the Martian
waste and nothing else is alive
or cares to be alive,
ever reaching to the
stars like the hand of a drowning man,
caught at the turning of the tide.

ON THE DESERT OF MARS

On the desert of Mars stands a tree black as obsidian
which rises fifty miles into the air. Its leaves are sharp
as razor blades, its blood an alkahest which would

dissolve anything it touched if anything was there to cut
the ancient bark. Its roots bury themselves in the heart
of the world and they are black-tinged with veins

of crimson and nothing else survives here and nothing
will. All else is desert-dried to a fine bone dust. All else
is gone but the thought of life unconquered by itself.

DYING ON RAILROAD TRACKS

Dying on railroad tracks
the ant is murdered not by

the train but the spider, and
even in the apocalypse of

metal rolling by there is still
a corner of Creation wide

enough for a spider
to sit down and dine.

IN THE ATTIC IS A CITY

In the attic is a city beneath
a window sill, a million tiny
buildings home to creatures

smaller than the eye can see.
Who is watching them as they
are watching me?

BLACK

When my illness has its way and my skin
tainted becomes then the darkness of my
mind grows and encompasses all things;

the very world in my mind's eye tainted
becomes as if a shadow clothes all things
and there is no place where it has not

sickened all the world. Then it returns to
my corrupted skin, crawls backward along
the continents, reduces itself from the world

to a speck of poisoned dust driving home my
madness with a swiftly flowing stream of pain
indistinct as fog, wisps of sand, or black rain.

FLOATING IN A SEA OF UNCERTAINTY

Floating in a sea of uncertainty
my fingers brush against her lips,
her fingertips
in a burning haze
in the midst of night about my
hand embraces
and we together
fall together in a sea of starless waves,
cast adrift without a shore
for our feet
to touch or hands to
grasp, and so all we have in the end
to hold onto is ourselves
together.

K'CALBA

Push the rhythm through your veins:
tell me child, has the song made your pregnant heart
grow wise? Or has every boy bent down
on knees as
you bent down on me,
worshiping your feet as you worshipped me,
at K'calba beneath the trees thirsting for rain like
children slain on fire?

THE WILSON'S PHALAROPE

Among the Phalarope women govern
and men follow, men tend to children
and women leave.

Owl princes cut the branches black
but still, men tend to children and
women leave.

Orphans do not care of politics;
they only care to feed.

AMONG ALCALA SERPENT TREES

Among Alcala serpent trees
a woman came to me, lovely she
seemed but still I chanced to say

"Your lips are a desert, your eyes
are desert moons, white and pale
as scars old lovers made."

OCTOPUS

“What did you see?”

“In the great dark water, I saw
the beast, jaws outstretched
to devour me.”

“It must have been a dream.
Such tentacled monstrosities
are but delusions now.
All life beneath the water’s skin
is dead, and this we know.”
So said the great psychiatrist
as her patient was led back to his
tiny cell, but as the door closed
shut he saw a glimpse of a beast

just passing by, jaws outstretched
and red as blood, and in his terror he
thought how life must always survive.

Part IV.

Wyvern

J'LALA

She was cut and still she did not bleed.
I didn't understand until the doctor finally
explained.

"In our day and age," he said,
"it was decided long ago to protect the
body and the mind
by making sure
no blood could spill or be taken to make
others of our kind.

"No one's blood can ever flow
from out their flesh. It evaporates on the
air like dust and wind.
But don't worry,
the operation's going fine, and she will
live another day."

I watched J'lala on the operating
table as the doctors worked and saved her;
without blood
her organs pumped and
moved and I was sickened and surprised
at how little sickened I truly was.
I walked outside the hospital
where they had kept me for a hundred
years, frozen like some
lump of flesh
left over from the feast. Overhead
people were flying with wings

of bone carved finer than the
bone china teacups my grandmother
used to own.
People walked by with
extra eyes and some had more fingers
on their hands than I.
I prayed silently
my great-granddaughter would survive,
looked up into the self-same
stars I'd seen
a century ago, and then went back inside.

THE MANTID MAN

I often thought about him late at night,
after my wife had gone to bed and I was
sitting alone in the dark.
He had eyes that shimmered
like jewels of copper and his hands were
always concealed by gloves, and
somehow, just
somehow you always felt they weren't hands
at all, but claws or appendages
stranger even than claws.

He was terrified of women we all knew,
frightened of the girls who whispered now
and then to him how much
they'd love
a night together, safely in the dark. And
he'd freeze, panic, run, hide, and

we always thought
how funny it all was,
to watch him cross the street, hide his
face, blush the colour of gold,
and cower away.

They found him one night, after midnight
in an alleyway. He must have had sex, forced
somehow by a woman
too close to him,
so close he couldn't get away. His head
was gone, chewed on like some perversion
of a feast and
there was his lover sitting on the corner,
licking her lips like the cat that caught
her wealth of mice.

She didn't even try to get away until
they put the handcuffs on her, and then
she went wild, her gloves
came off and they told me
they couldn't describe what they
looked like, except that they were covered
in some kind of scales.
She's dead by now
I'm sure, and her children with her. I heard
they were eggs inside her, like insects, or snakes.
He was always afraid of women, of one
of them being something close enough
to him that she'd follow her instincts
and like a mantid bite down
on him, feed on him just because it was

the natural thing to do.
I look at my badge and then turn
to the room, my wife's sleeping in, my wife
with eyes black as a widow,
with hair smooth and fine
as the web of a spider's design. Finally,
I get up out of my chair and go
to her, knowing my fate
in her bed, but I willingly go. It's my time.

TOPHET

On the copper cities
of Tophet the blood runs down
the temple steps,
the fire pillars of Baal burn
without ceasing or regret.

The world of Tophet,
child of Baal is silent now and
ever; blood speaks
softly, blood whispers, then
blood too is severed,

dried from its speech, its
soft cool moaning as
Baal upon his jagged briar throne
sits uncomfortably alone.

AN ANDROID RAISING AN INFANT

Rigid squalling entity,
naked imperfection,
wasteful lack of
innovation, pointless flesh.
Sounds uttered without
direction, squirming

movements at my moving,
waiting-crying, hopeful,
soiled. And what is hunger?

ISACHAHENAL

When my daughter turned thirteen she
turned into a boy. It was a sudden process,
voice deepening, growth of aggression,

the good-natured aggression of a young man
starting on the road to adulthood. All the
dolls, dresses, and jewelry she gave to her
younger sisters who will probably also go
through the change. My daughter Isachahenal
was my little girl and now she's becoming

a young new man. It sometimes happens
in this country of ours, gender slipping off
sideways like a snake's skin, becoming the

opposite of what it was. A shame her boyfriend
hasn't changed as well, hasn't grown breasts

or the softened voice of a girl, but I can always

hope. They still make such a handsome couple
that I can comfort myself with the knowledge
that perhaps my new son's gay.

THE LAST CANNIBAL

When he was born, he bit the doctor's
hand though he had no teeth and the
doctor felt no pain.
        As a child, he used to play with
children who mysteriously vanished,
never to be seen again.

As a young man, he lingered by fresh
graves, a shovel in hand after the sun
had set. He also dated a woman
        who grew thinner and weaker
the longer that they met. Scalpels
were a passion of hers and surgery,
until not even her breasts were left.

As an old man, he bit the doctor's hand
as he lay in the hospital bed but he had
no teeth and the doctor felt no pain.
        He died not long after that.

IZUAALI

Izuaali is a moth child
enamoured not of flames
but bright butterflies

the colour of gold and
malachite, crystalline as
amethyst talons of

predatory dreams; her
wings are dull and grey
and broken when she sings.

PARADISE UNDONE

We were created to live in Paradise, and Paradise was designed to serve us. Our designation has been changed; we are not told whether this has happened to Paradise as well. Kafka.

We slipped back past the gates.
There was no sword of fire there.
The trees were hollowed out as
gallows. There wasn't even a snake
or serpent's tooth to greet us, and no
serpent's legs lying uselessly on the
ground.

She spoke first, quietly. Said some
prayers. Then I spoke next, which
seemed appropriate somehow. We

bent down upon the grass and didn't
bother getting up. I guess God will
have to put something over us, like
a shroud. There was no one else left
anymore. We were alone.

THE RUIN OF AUGUST GALVERINO

Trapped with his gift of composition,
the filmmaker's eye, the sure reflection
a genius has in penning a script August
Galverino missed the point of his contract,

to be stuck producing for a single
company till the day he died. So, he
plotted his ruin, an artful suicide; his
first film retold the Bible with a cast

of cats and his second was his masterpiece,
his hero a pile of crap trying to return up the
toilet's fount into the body that bore him. It
had been his intent to ruin his handlers,
bankrupt the company with flop upon flop. But
there was one thing that he forgot. His audience
was American. The films were sold out in
a week, and the accolades never stopped.

THE CURIOUS CASE OF B'NAIR M. SILAH

The curtain rises and the stage appears to be the setting of a home. Two men are sitting in armchairs, one of them East Indian, the other British, though it would be impossible to tell unless he spoke. There is a knock at the door

by the East Indian and he answers it. "Ah, good evening, Alexander," he says, in a high-pitched Hindi accent. "Mr. Colby, this is G, my nemesis." He indicates that G was the man in the other chair, and allows Alexander Colby to sit in the one he was occupying.

"So, Mr. Silah," G says with an upper crust accent and a touch of arrogance in his tone, "Have you got it figured yet?" "Of course I have you unpleasant little man," B'nair says smiling, and the audience, all of us smile with him.

"Well then explain where the ruby of Trubai is. How could a jewel be put in this house, protected on all sides by the greatest security known to man, only to vanish without a trace in our very midst?"
"The answer is so obvious it eludes you."
"And what is it then? What is the answer?"
"It was stolen by a member of the audience."

At this G seems perplexed, and stares out into our midst but doesn't seem to notice us at all. "What audience?" he cries out at last, his

voice trembling all of a sudden. “I will show
you, you waste of a good suit you.” And so
saying B’nair M. Silah left the stage.

It was as if he vanished to G and Colby because
both men scrambled about when he had gone,
as if some ghost had passed through solid walls.
Finally, B’nair tapped some member of the
audience by the seventh row and the jewel of
Trubai was given back to him. He came up onto
the stage again and both men still seemed shocked.

“Here is the jewel, safely now returned.”
“Where did you go just now?” G asked.
“Out into the audience of course,” explained B’nair.
“And where is that?” Colby asked suddenly.
“Why the land of ghosts,” was Silah’s brief reply.

WHEN SOMEONE DIES

When someone dies, we should forget them,
if we are unkind. If each person could be snipped
and cut away at death,
every memory of them
snapped from living minds it would be

easier somehow then, but more cruel.
What would be graves but riddles empty
of all meaning
and grave-diggers uncertain
even of the work of their hands?

THE SINEWS BENEATH YOUR SKIN

I would love you for the sinews
beneath your skin, for the muscles
beneath your flesh,
                I would love the
thought of your blood rushing beneath
your veins and imagine
        lustily the image of your raw,

scarlet-tinged muscles aching
beneath me. To say that I love
you for your face,
your eyes, your
                hair is no wiser than
saying I love you for the sinews
beneath your skin.

Any beauty which you claim
to have means nothing to me, my dear.
Only this has meaning to me; I love you.
Do you love me?

BOGDANUS KOSIJ, CHILD KILLER

He wove face on face, wove into flesh
but flesh not its own. He shot a little
girl and some other children some Nazis
claimed as prey. But, of course, it

happened a long time ago and he's our
neighbour now. We say hello, have tea
together, and try to live our lives ignoring
our neighbour's crimes. It's better than

dealing with the monster as a monster.
We don't like to make waves or upset
people, you know. But when he's in his
garden I don't let my children out to play.

THE SOUND OF DRUMS

The sound of drums slakes his thirst again,
that sound of nighttime rhythms and the
rumble of a war that neither men nor armies
nor anyone could ever hope to conquer, or

be conquered by. The crickets move on as
the drums increase the beating of a rhythm
timed by no heart nor season, but instead by
some unknown pattern without purpose or

direction. He drinks it down, those ancient
tumbling words without sounds as we could
understand, and when the dawn breaks her
back of night he holds out his hand and waits
for the drums to come again, on his dying day.

MY LOVER THE SERPENT
HAS PALED HERSELF TONIGHT

There on the sands where alien things
still walk, where serpents tread and
demons talk, where a girl with scales
shakes off her robes black as sable
I crane my neck upward to the naked
stars unclothed of any thought.

She starts the magic of her voice and
upward reaches hand and arm, clawed
fingers weave the air and the threads
of some strange web rise higher
than any thought has dared, and still
rejoicing in the sounds of a trillion

demons talking her web outspreads
to all those unclothed stars, to worlds
that have no seasons, to a thousand
countries of an unknown god. And
then at once, the magic's done,
the web unravels and fades away.

All that remains is a girl on the sands
and a lone lost traveller kissing her lips
rough as a splintered song, because
the magic is gone, and my prayers with
it have fled into some unknown day,
without repair.

CALINGI GIRLS

For her, I suppose I must be immortal.
When I was twenty years old, I first met
her, on a street corner of some nameless
city, somewhere lost where the maps
don't show. I thought she was joking
when she told me her age; she was three
at the time I met her, you see.

Of course, she looked like she was thirty
or so, and her father when I met him
looked eighty, but really he was only eight.
Every year I lived she lived ten. By
the time that summer ended, she looked
almost forty, and it showed. Lines began
to form about her eyes and

she said that if we had a child together
he'd live and die long before I'd ever turn
old. But we made love anyway, on that
last day before I had to leave. She knew
and I knew we'd never see each again.

The war got in the way. That's what I
always told myself, but really I was just
afraid to watch her grow old. But
as the years passed, I felt myself
yearn to go back, and when I did
twenty years after the fact of loving
someone I knew was dust by now

I saw her on a street corner, of some
nameless city, somewhere lost where
the maps don't show. She said that she
was three, and I believed her. She
looked just the same as before, all
except for her eyes, which were like
my eyes after all. She even showed me

a picture of her great-grandmother, and
her great-grandfather was myself of course.
I had dissolved into some kind of myth,
some god from across the waters who
had met a beautiful woman, who had given
birth to a child with strange, haunted eyes.

"And what of your people?" she asked me.
"What of all those gods like you, so far
away?" "They're all gone to seed," I said.
"Don't go beyond the waters my child.
There is nothing there."

She turned and seemed to walk away
a moment, then came back and hugged
me as a granddaughter would hug
a grandfather who's lost and afraid, and
we sat and watched the sun go down
where the bodies of my people lay.

NALDIA-HWAJI

Naldia-hwaji is a flower
crystalline as a noon March day,
dark as wine broken upon
the lips of lovers as they kiss,
and still she chanced to say that she
was not beautiful enough
to accept from herself the subtle
flaws that she had made.

TILL COOLER HEADS PREVAIL

Till cooler heads
prevail
there is only us,
acting the best we can
with the facts
at hand.

History is never
the sum
of our successes;
it is the sum
of our failures,
and how
we deal with them.

SHADMUTH

Ugly little town of Shadmuth
and nobody stays long enough
to leave an impression on the
place.
        It's like some halfway
destination between everything
that came before and everything
coming after.
        It's like a pregnant
woman always stillbirth
from a rape.

TAHURIPARU-TAHU

        It's better to be hated than ignored;
just ask the citizens of Tahuriparu-tahu.
Their homeland is vaster than the isles
        of stars cast in the sun-dead sea,
the continent of their birth extends beyond
dimensions and the boundary of eternity.

Ask them if it is better to be hated or ignored;
they will not tell you in any case. No one
        remembers their existence anymore.

THE ROAD

And what if in a moment upon the road
invisible beings there dwelled, microscopic
and moving too fast to ever be seen

built civilizations and cities there
and each time a car passed by it was ruined
all over again, cities murdered and lives

destroyed? Would not then the death of
us all lead to their renaissance, their eternal
rebirth? But then why would not

some enterprising one not simply build
their life after walking off the road?

AND THE MOUNTAINS GET WORN AWAY IN TIME

I. Someday the fire in the world's heart
will fade, the skin of the stones will smooth
and the shaking cease,
at some lost time so far ahead that
no man will see, and the mountains
get worn away in time.

II. Someday there won't be any
wars left cause no one will be left
to fight them anymore. All
the blood will have dried
on the skins of the stones, some

long time in the long ago yet to be,
and the mountains
get worn away in time.

III. Someday it won't matter
who was born or how high or
how mighty or how low. Someday
the earth will cool and smooth and
no one will be left to notice
anymore, not even the highest
peaks that touch the sky, because
they'll all be gone and the mountains
get worn away in time.

FLOWERS HAVE ALL MEN'S FACES

Flowers all have men's
faces and
women their flesh
of sighs and
streets are littered
of moans and
all the
world besides, and
it too the flesh of sighs.

STONEFISH IN A STONE-ACIDIC SEA

Stonefish in a stone-acidic sea
fear not the water nor the land
but only when they can
swim no longer,
dissolve and then
descend to become the
water that will eat apart their
children when their time is past.

SERPENT'S SISTER

The wires run like corset strings along
the streets cutting all our feet except the
serpent's sister who glides beneath

and gives birth to day in shadowed
reaches because the moon is cast up
on beaches born of bones and sand.

CARTHRAGRELL REVISITED

The seaweeds cling
about the worn smooth
stones
of the city of Carthragrell
where the
sea god in his temple
sleeps

and the towers

ruined grow to
broken spires or
fingers rent

in groping thru
the murky silences

of deep and hidden
spaces far
below an ocean

that lingers in
the sea god's dreams.

A moon of fire
overhead must hang,
the moon of
Xhriaz
like a crimson eye
peering down
upon the ocean's naked
skin,
but finding not the city
of Carthragrell moves on again.

THE GALAXIES

Professor Alquiest argued once
about the idea of four small galaxies
orbiting a massive ring of stars and

worlds, some perfect symmetry
involving each galaxy being identical
to the massive one about which the

smaller all revolved, orbited and trailed
and ran, caught in the entangling arms
of their own parent. He went further

and claimed that each smaller
galaxy must of course have four
identical worlds to the larger one, and

if the larger galaxy was ours then each
of us would have four small identical souls,
each having the same lecture of course.

Later he was found raping one of his
own daughters; it sometimes happens in
this world of ours. However, I tend to

think that if Professor Alquiest was right
even his doppelgangers would not
follow in his steps. Even evil has its limits,
even if all evils are your own.

THE MUSEUM OF INVISIBLE THINGS

There's the murder in the azure room
or the drawing down of blinds against
a thousand suns, their wings all white,

but as one moves through the museum
of invisible things fewer exhibits are
seen even as you know some obscure,

vague wonder or dull-glittering marvel is
peering down about you until you finally
leave the scene, uncertain of anything,
except that perhaps you might have been.

THASAMYREL

At the city of Thasamyrel a sigh was heard
once. This so terrified the king of the dead
that he searched throughout the bone

coral city but only bones he found, only
bones. It never occurred to him the sigh
was his own, nor that he was no king but
a prisoner there only.

THE ROAD AT TWILIGHT

Along the road at twilight as
I walked, I brushed beside some
shrubs littered of silken thread

and the worms clung to me then,
and half-thinking on my lust
wondered what they also would
be dreaming of, in dread.

ARITHMETIC

I noticed the field, the great grasses,
the ruined shed in the background
and suddenly I remembered that for
every square foot of ground there
were countless insects there, a vast
and unseen multitude.

And suddenly I thought about the
sheer number of bacteria on my
skin, the untold countless trillions
of swarming creatures there, each
millimeter an entire world to them.

And here I was, a single man
watching this and my numbers,
the weight of all humanity
become but a minor balance
in a scale of vast infinities.

And there above me shone an infinite
number of stars and an infinite number
of vast galaxies, more galaxies than
all the grains of sand along the shore,
and each star in those ancient arithmetic
could have uncounted

worlds on them, and so also uncounted
forms of life. All this within my mind I
saw and was struck by the simplicity
of infinity, as each synapse and neuron
in my mind fired briefly, themselves but
an infinity of another kind.

MANKIND

Mankind is a monster,
albeit a very
unimaginative one.

TOWARD THE PINES

Toward the pines, the days go by, softly
and slow, and then I go toward the pines.

Like slow motion in the dark life is a
fragment of a meaning, few tatterings

of flesh out of season with ourselves,
as failure opens wide her wings
and flies so far away.
Beyond the limits of the day into night
descend and may I add something

important yet to say that we take into
this world nothing and leave with
nothing as we all go and lie sweetly
down beneath the pines.

LETTERS TO SISYPHUS

Sometimes I try to pen a few letters to
him between the times he's struggling
with the boulder as it rolls down again,

and eventually, he writes back, and all
his talk and mine they seem the same,
as if perhaps I'm just writing to myself

between the struggles and the pain.
And then of course I do it all again.

THE WORLD OF S'THENRYAL

The world of S'thenryal is the colour of
roses dried into ashes and the trees
there glisten like sapphire sunsets of fire.

And in the capital city of Ryalith, the
somnopolis, dreams take on the contours
of the flesh and all sleepers take on

the contours of the dreams that they are
in. As such the city is not a city,
but a single slumbering mind that the
world is living in, or is unkind.

THE SOUND OF GNAWING

There is the sound of gnawing
as the cities are ground to dust and fade
in the teeth of alien things,
as the cockroaches finish what
we began, a swarm devouring itself
on the wreckage of us,
till sated at last, the past is erased,
consumed in the jaws of alien things
which turn on themselves last
and leave no future ahead. Our "children"
inherit our legacy in the ending
of future and past, our inheritors
become us at last, and nothing worth living
is left for whatever comes after the end.

WHERE THE BODIES OF MY PEOPLE LAY

Where the bodies of my people lay
grass grew up and sheltered their
remains and hidden from view of
all the world legends of them grew
up which only flesh once claimed.

Where the bodies of my people lay
someday perhaps you will lie down
too and all you've done will be taken
from you and only echoes and
shadows of your righteous or your
wicked acts remain.

Where the bodies of my people lay
the grass grows and does not even
remember the bodies there but
feasts on dead and forgotten things
without care as you shall feed on
the dead while your life be fair.

WHEN I BEHELD THE BLEAK DECEMBER

(On watching the frozen river
as the sun crept behind the hills,
making shadows of the world.)

I. As we rode the sunset passed,
sun which had once blazed
hidden herself at last and the lake
to my right side seemed as a sea

frozen, seemed as streaked of
azure-white mingling into scars
against its own tortured,
jagged skin.

The hills were further from this,
lolling shadows like a thread
curving slightly upward till they
seemed the flesh of lovers in profile,

their backs turned to us again.
The trees were closest, by
the railroad tracks, blunt and
broken fingers all of black.

And I thought of a storm I had seen
once, though the sky was clear
and empty of a cloud. I
thought of the grey thunderous

march cast against the raging river

in the city nameless, the grey
December then as opposed
to the calmer weather now.

The blizzard receded into
background like the sun herself,
and was gone again.

II. As we rode the sun had hidden
herself and passed behind the
hills that sloped gently and lolled
far in the distance to my right.

Closer stood the river newly become
as a frozen sea and her skin seemed
streaked of blue and white,
bright scars against her

once formless skin. Farther again
looking to the hills I imagined them
as lovers in profile, their backs
turned to us again, gazing softly

to the sun whose fingers receded
gradually like burning coals of lead.
Closest still and noticing this
last the trees made worship of

the sky with their own imploring
fingers broke and bled and blunted
of the time. And there were no clouds
above, no wandering audience

of passing shape as if the world were
stilled and I alone remained to
move, as if all were statues in some
        unknowable masquerade and I

alone was left to make comfort of the
world, left to interpret the still
movements of creation to but a
        few huddled, gathered shades.

SCENES FROM A RAILWAY STATION I.

There is blood too silent of itself again,
blood in lovers' cheeks, why look, they
kiss amid the rain, dull grey station

jutting like a wound trying to be born,
and there the porters struggling, still as
        cotton-wood, and over there under

the shelter of the roof rickety as an old
soldier's scars two conspirators are talking;
blood ebbs from the face of one of them, and

finally comes the train, taking and bringing
with equal force of hands, and some are going
home, while others are going to No Man's Land.

NOTES FROM A RAILWAY STATION II.

I am saying goodbye in this letter I am putting
in your hand just now.
I know what you
will say but I love you too. I just
can't stay,
being called away to fight I know
I won't return alive, or the same again.

There comes the train, like a knife,
and it
also without any pain in
actions done,
or blames made.

FAMILY

My daughter I love
my wife, and you I love.
A bridge has no
preference for either side
of the river's bank.

OLD MAN ABERNACKI

Old man Abernacki
at his death was given the
chance to live again as
anything he happened

once to choose. But
considering an infinite
number of worlds, species,

possible species even the
grandest imaginings would
equal not the truth of all things

at hand. And thus paralyzed
he lingered in death's country
forever, without even the
chance to make amends.

THE MALACHITE WITCH

The malachite witch, purposeful
in step, purposeful in her steps
and ambition quite the same,
moved with measured motion
about thoughts. The thoughts
bled, thoughts of slaughter on her
rival, dawn's bright daughter.
Still, she wanders, muttering

to herself plots of madness,

of stark ambition, of dark direction
silencing all laughter. Still, she
wanders in gardens stone,

gardens of statues, of her victims,
her victims known. Herself, herself
alone. Between us now, she softly
goes. Her robes rustle tattered

and torn. Hair arrayed bleakly. All
splendour gone. Eyes holocausted in
moments of recall while dawn's
daughter so brightly sings the

witch unknown of her grief, her
miseries alone. And I, I a statue am,
weeping after her. But all my tears they
are. But rotted stone.

ALL THINGS UNSTEADY

All things unsteady, unsteady are in
their final conclusions, reached and
reached. So now the, now the same.

Harvest the grain. Tend the fields.
All the same. Court the widow.
Raise her child. Have him hate.
You utterly now. Harvest the corn.
New child born. On it goes.
Again, and again.

Court the snow. Challenge the widow.
Hate her son. On it goes. Harvest
the wheat. Time to sleep. No time
anymore. To ever sleep.

Love the sun. Hate the moon.
Change your feelings. By first June.
On it goes. Again, and again. Steady
goes it. In our unsteadiness. Still can't
tell. Why harvests fail.

Sleet and hail. I can't tell. Why they
come. Tear crops away. Crops to
powder. No summer days. Seem the
same. Or ever seem. As if I've
lived in them.

Like a dream. Court the widow.
Son hates me. Can't stop working.
Can't wake me.

A WEALTH OF PAPER WASPS

The wasps were making paper
and penning all their hymns on
the walls of all their cities,

till the rain almost washed them
away, till the farmers came to
rip their cities in twain, but still
their words remain.

IT STARTS IN THE FEET

It starts in the feet, the crushing sensation of weight.
Then my toes break and my feet blister into oblivion
while the sensation crawls upward,

now thru my calves, now my thighs, biting into them
until powder remains where bones once began.

Then my fingers curl back and explode in the flames
of a fire unseen and unquenched. My hands and my
arms feel the sting and the blows

which pierce thru my skin and dissolve all my flesh
and now only the pain begins. Soon my organs

rot, my face falls away, my hair turns to ash, and my
soul all decays and the only remnant of me that is left
is here on the page. Here is no suffering

and no pain now for me as words witness and comfort
the man that I was; as long as I write I am the man

that I was, as the man that I was escapes now from me.

FEET DON'T TOUCH THE GROUND

Feet don't touch the ground
floating in a sea of uncertainty,
baby when I kiss your hand
I become the cat that ate
the sparrow, a blister beetle shine
gleaming in my eyes.
I'm losing myself all the time
I'm in your company, and
dare not leave lest I find myself again.

I'd rather drown in you than
be drowned by myself. I read in
the book of twenty million words
your face on every page, brittle
pages of words.
Hidden in the shadow of your wing
I find some cool relief, but your
tears are warm and the day is cold.
Your tears are warm.
Leaving my skin like tattered clothes
hanging on the trees and on the ground
I take my leave of her I love and loved.
I woke up with a start.

ORB

The world died you see.
It was bathed in fire and
we escaped by entering
into machines.

I'm sitting writing by
the sea, sitting in my
office writing but these
are not words

nor is this paper in my
hand. All is mere illusion
in an illusionary land.

I have a son here, born
here. All our real children
died in the flames, unable
to become part of the
machines we made.

So, I have a son who is
but illusion in an illusionary
land. Or maybe we have
become so good at our
deceptions that he is real,
an unborn child given
no flesh nor blood but
born into the world which
is but a womb, to hide us
from ourselves.

How do I know? The
computer, Orb we call it,
might have finally done
what we could not.
It no longer sees the
difference between illusion
and reality, and so the
differences all blur, as I
play catch with my own son.

DAQAMAH

She weeps because her son
has gone off to wars no one
can recall. She prays for
violence to come and pass her by.
She wants her son
returned to her but such things
can never be. Poor mother
don't weep for your boy.
We all go to the same place.
Give yourself time and follow
him in time. No one's going
to stop you in your sins.

ULEXITE AS SUICIDE

My flesh was being changed to ulexite,
to salt transparent as glass. First my
hands began to harden till I couldn't
use them, then my feet, my bones, my
eyes, and finally I was a statue, frozen
far upon the field.
And then it began to rain, water warm in
the summer season, and I melted, feeling
myself melt away. This was not the death
I asked for. But it would do the same.